

Small Tornado Rips Up Older Mobile Homes in Largo



Photograph of damaged mobile homes along a street in the Palm Hill Country Club mobile home park.

More than 50 Mobile Homes Damaged by Whirling Dervish

A small tornado rapidly developed near the intersection of two - and perhaps three - low level boundaries at around 605 PM EDT July 20th, 2005. The primary boundary was an outflow from an intense cell developing near Seminole, moving northwest. The collision point appeared to be the nearly stationary gulf coast sea breeze, which was located a few miles inland (note the broken green line in western Pinellas County). A third boundary may have also existed, traveling northeast from a weakening storm west of the southern Pinellas coastline.

The tornado, which touched down along Ulmerton Road just east of Seminole Boulevard, moved northwest for about 1/2 mile (Figure 2), caused damage at five mobile home parks. Much of the damage occurred at the Palm Hill Country Club mobile home park.

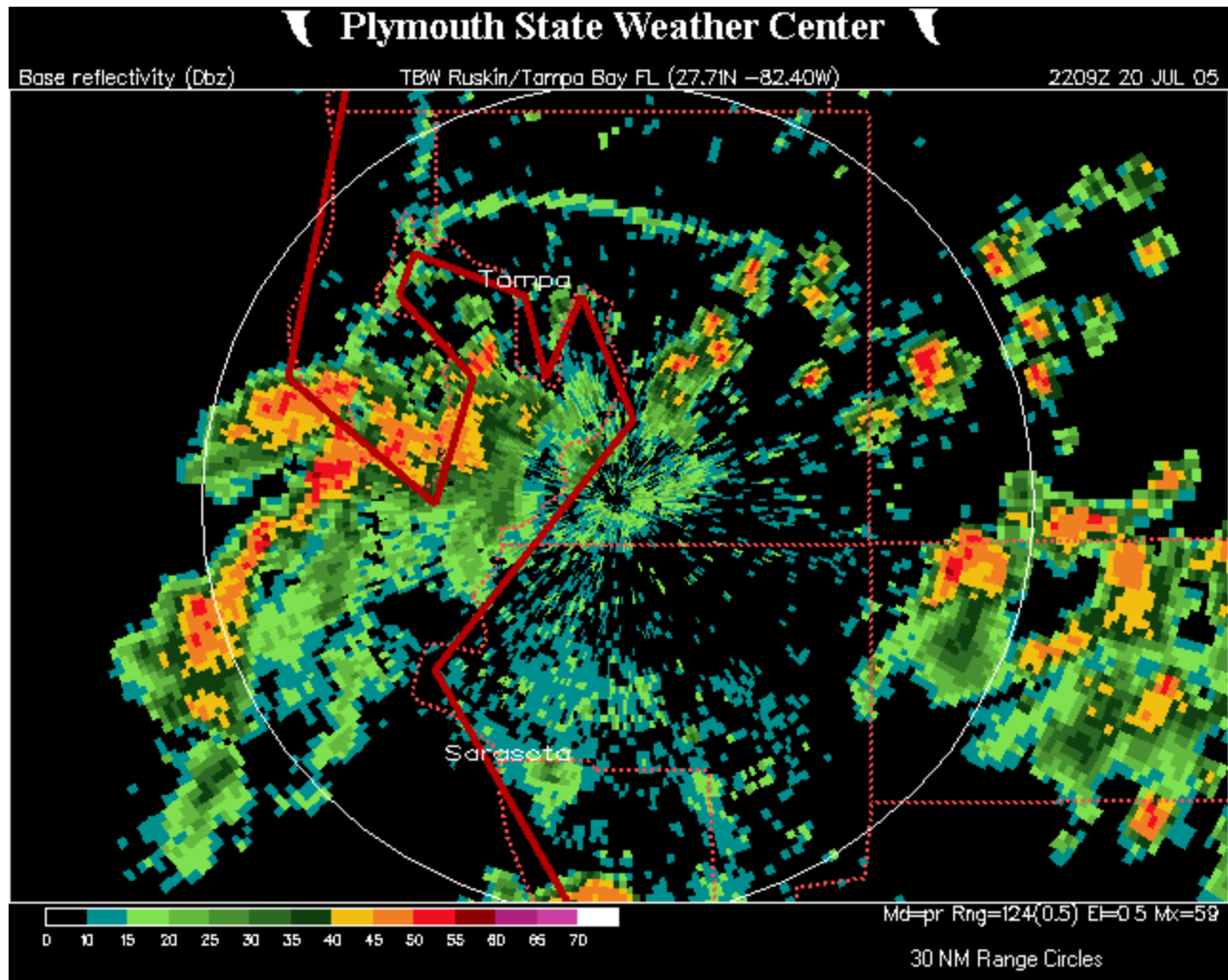


Figure 1. Base reflectivity, 609 PM EDT. Note the arcing outflow boundary from the stronger storm over Seminole and St. Petersburg.

Since the storm affected a heavily populated area during the evening commute, there were a number of eyewitnesses. One provided a very descriptive account of this unique event. This eyewitness noted a funnel shaped debris swirl which grew to a little more than two stories in height. As it crossed over Ulmerton from south to north, the swirl was rather small, but became wider and taller on the north side of the road. At that point, larger debris (such as wood pieces and shingles) turned the mass a brownish color; soon after, the swirl struck a transformer or small substation, which sparked.

In addition, the resident had driven out of heavy rain from the east into no precipitation when the tornado occurred. The sky toward the Gulf was bright. Given that the twister developed at the leading edge of the strongest storm, it is possible that the event may have been a gustnado.



Figure 2. Track of Largo tornado (red curve) as overlay on map of west central Pinellas County. Click on image for a zoomed view.

Other Storms Produce Minor Damage

After Hurricane Dennis disrupted the flow pattern, a more typical early summer pattern developed across west central and southwest Florida around July 10th. The general east to southeast flow produced its share of strong to severe thunderstorms, producing not only the above tornado and land/waterspout near Punta Gorda, but a few other notable events. An apparent downburst took down several small trees and blew loose objects around in the Keystone community northwest of Tampa on July 12th. Another downburst uprooted a mangrove and knocked down a large entry sign in a Clearwater community on Old Tampa Bay (right). In each case, the wind gusts appear to have been near or a little below severe limits (58 mph).





Pictures of minor damage at the Caribay community in south Clearwater.

PUBLIC INFORMATION STATEMENT
NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE TAMPA BAY AREA - RUSKIN FL
427 PM EDT THU JUL 21 2005

...F0 TORNADO PRODUCED DAMAGE IN LARGO WEDNESDAY EVENING...

AN OFFICIAL DAMAGE SURVEY CONDUCTED BY THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE IN RUSKIN FLORIDA CONFIRMED THAT THE WIND DAMAGE IN LARGO WEDNESDAY EVENING WAS THE RESULT OF AN F0 TORNADO. THE SURVEY FOUND THAT THE PATH OF THE TORNADO WAS ONE HALF MILE IN LENGTH WITH A WIDTH OF 75 YARDS. BASED ON PUBLIC REPORTS AND DOPPLER RADAR DATA THE TIME OF THE EVENT WAS AROUND 605 PM EDT.

AT LEAST TWO BOUNDARIES WERE VISIBLE ON RADAR EARLY WEDNESDAY EVENING...ONE NEARLY STATIONARY (THE GULF COAST SEA BREEZE) JUST ONSHORE OF WESTERN PINELLAS COUNTY AND ANOTHER MOVING FROM SOUTHEAST TO NORTHWEST FROM SAINT PETERSBURG TOWARD LARGO...CLEARWATER...AND THE CENTRAL PINELLAS BEACHES.

WHEN THE OUTFLOW FROM THE PRIMARY STORM MOVING THROUGH CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN PINELLAS COUNTY REACHED THE NEARLY STATIONARY SEA BREEZE BOUNDARY NEAR LARGO...ENOUGH WIND SHEAR WAS GENERATED TO ALLOW THE WEAK F0 TORNADO TO FORM.

THE TORNADO BROUGHT DAMAGE TO FIVE MOBILE HOME PARKS INCLUDING

HONEYVINE...TOWN N COUNTRY...RANCHERO...PALM HILL NORTH...AND SUGAR CREEK. 43 MOBILE HOMES WERE DAMAGED...25 WITH HEAVY DAMAGE. NO INJURIES OR FATALITIES WERE REPORTED. APPROXIMATELY 25000 RESIDENTS OF THE AREA LOST POWER AFTER THE EVENT.